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## An Inscribed Incense Burner from the MacLean Collection in Chicago

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The incense burner (figure 1) which is part of a larger set comprising also four large candlesticks (figure 2), was published by Richard A. Pegg in the catalogue "Passion for Form: Selections of Southeast Asian Art from the Maclean Collection" (Honolulu 2007) without, however, the text of the inscription. As this inscription is not without interest, and, first of all, gives the date of the donation, I am thankful to Professor Richard Salomon for drawing my attention to this object and, moreover, I am particularly obliged to Dr. Pegg for allowing me to publish this text.

The inscription runs along the handle of the incense burner in one line and a half (figure 3). Due to corrosion, it is not easy to read, and some doubts concerning details remain. The reading was achieved by using a very helpful rubbing (figure 4) and by enlarging and manipulating the photographs provided by Dr. Pegg on the computer.

1. # sam 7 (ha) 2 āṣāḍha(s)asy(ā) 3 deva(dharmmo) ya[m] śrī śīlāditya[naṃ]d[i](na)  
(pu)ṇya (maṅga{la})
2. vra(ddha)ye vora karita iti || ||

The meaning of the single akṣara *ha* (or *hu*, but the stroke indicating a subscript *-u* might be accidental) is obscure<sup>1</sup>. *āṣāḍhasasya*, if read correctly, is probably a mistake for

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<sup>1</sup> The akṣara *ha*, which resembles the shape of the figure "8" belonging to a different set of figures and not matching the shape of the figure "7" used in this inscription, cf. G. Fussman: *Chilas, Hatun et les bronzes bouddhiques du Cachemire*, in K. Jettmar (Ed.): *Antiquities of Northern Pakistan. Reports and Studies* Vol. 2. Mainz 1993, planche 22 "... sam 70 āśvayujya śu di 8," where the matching figures "7" and "8" can be seen side by side. Although according to the opinio communis only figures written like "70+8" were in use until the middle of the 7th century, cf. R. Salomon: *Indian Epigraphy*. New York and Oxford, p. 61 § 2.4.1.3 and O. v. Hinüber: *Die Palola Śāhis Ihre Steininschriften, Inschriften auf Bronzen, Handschriftenkolophone und Schutzzauber*. *Antiquities of Northern Pakistan. Reports and Studies* 5. Mainz 2004, p. 68 note 16: The date with the figure 70 = A.D. 594 and that in the inscription on the pedestal of the Buddha of the year 92 = A.D. 616, Fussman planche 27, p. 32, are earlier. Moreover, *Laukika* 78 = A.D. 602/603 (if *ha* is taken as "8") does not have a double *āṣāḍha*, cf. L. D. Swamikannu Pillai: *Indian Chronology (Solar, Lunar and Planetary). A Practical Guide* ..... B.C. 1 to A.D. 2000. 1911. Repr. Delhi 1962, p. 54. A possible correspondence to *Laukika* 78 with a double *āṣāḍha* is A. D. 502, cf. Pillai p. 48, which, however, is too early considering the way in which the figure is written.

°māsasya or °māsyā. A stroke at the right side of the akṣara sya, if not accidental, would indicate an unwarranted long ā. In spite of these problems, the overall structure of the date seems to be clear: “in the year 7 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the second month āṣāḍha.” The “second month āṣāḍha” indicates an intercalary month. On the very likely assumption that the Laukika era is referred to and in accordance with the palaeography, particularly the tripartite -ya-, only AD 531/32 or 631/32 are possible choices. Even by unduly enlarging the bracket beyond what seems palaeographically possible and including also AD 731/732, only 531/532 turns out to be a leap year and, consequently, only in this year there were two months āṣāḍha<sup>2</sup>. As neither the day of the week nor the *pakṣa* is indicated, the exact date cannot be determined, but it can be narrowed down to Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June, Monday 21<sup>st</sup> June or Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> July 532 AD<sup>3</sup>.

Although only *deva* and *ya(m)* are clearly visible, there is no doubt about this common formula.

The first part of the name is safe. When manipulating the colour, the akṣara *lā* becomes clearly visible. From the second part of the name the akṣara *naṃ* disappeared almost completely, while *dana* instead of the expected and required *dinā* or *dino* (the latter seems to be less likely given the visible traces) are fairly certain. Consequently, the name can be reconstructed as Śīlādityanandin with confidence.

The reading of the next word as *puṇya* seems fairly likely. At the end of the first line *maṅga* is possible, but also *mani* (less likely) cannot be ruled out. Traces of one more akṣara seem to indicate a reading *la*. Thus *maṅgala* seems to be a possible choice, while *manila* would not yield any meaning.

Almost everything is doubtful in the second line except that it ends in *iti*. This ending is a bit unusual in inscriptions of that type. However, a parallel could be provided from South India by the Vīrapuruṣadatta inscription from Phanigiri<sup>4</sup>, which also ends in *iti*.

The first akṣara in the second line is *vra* followed by what looks like a *ddha* in spite of the fact that the subscript *dha* is not closed at the right side. Therefore, an alternative reading could be *dr*. However, considering the fact that the scribe avoided -ṛ- in the first

<sup>2</sup> Repeating the month āṣāḍha at the beginning of the rainy season to make calendar and season tally is attested for the first time in the Theravāda-Vinaya: *rājā ... vassam ukkaddhitukāmo ... ayyā āgame junhe vassam upagaccheyyūṃ*, Vin I 138, 33 “the King wishes to postpone the rainy season ... the monks should enter the rains retreat at the next full moon.” This refers to the month āṣāḍha as *aparajjugatāya āsāhiyā*, Vin I 137, 26 “on the day immediately following the full moon in āṣāḍha” which is the usual date for entering the rains retreat. — The later system of intercalary months is described by H. Jacobi: *The computation of Hindu dates in inscriptions*, & *El I*, 1892, p. 403-460, particularly p. 414 foll., and *Kleine Schriften*, Wiesbaden 1970, II p. 912 or by R. Sewell: *Indian Chronography. An Extension of “The Indian Calendar” with Working Examples*, London 1912, p. 37 foll.

<sup>3</sup> I am obliged to Professor Claus Vogel, Bonn, who kindly calculated and communicated these dates in a letter dtd. 16th December 2009.

<sup>4</sup> On this site see P. Skilling: *New discoveries from South India: The life of the Buddha at Phanigiri*, Andhra Pradesh. *Arts Asiatiques* 63, 2008, p. 96-118. A preliminary edition of this inscription was published by K. Munirathnam: *Rudrapurisadatta inscription from Phanigiri*, *Studies in Indian Epigraphy* 32, 2005, p. 78-81, who failed to fully understand the text.

syllable of the assumed *vraddhaye* and in *karita* (see blow), it is unlikely that *-dṛ-*, which would not lead to any comprehensible word, is intended here. The next character can be safely read as *ye*. This, then would yield *punya-maṅgala-vraddhaye* “for the increase of auspicious merit,” if *vraddhaye* is understood as *vraddhaye*.

The reading *vorakarita iti* seems fairly certain. To reach at a sensible interpretation this complex could be divided into two words *vora karita* meaning “Vora made (it).” However, neither is *Vora*<sup>5</sup> any common name nor is *karita* a correct form, to say nothing in respect to grammar, which is, as it is well known, not always highly respected in this type of inscriptions<sup>6</sup>. Reading *bora*, *cora* or *dhora*, unlikely as they are given the shape of the akṣara, does not help either. If *Vora* is taken as a personal name, *Vora* is one of the few artisans mentioned on early art objects<sup>7</sup>.

The assumed past participle *karita* could replace *kṛta*, because skt. *-ṛ-* is not only pronounced as *-ri-*, or less frequently as *-ra-*, but rarely also as *-ari-*<sup>8</sup>. It is much less likely that *kārita* is meant, which then should be taken in the sense of “made” and not in the more usual meaning “had (the incense burner) made”, because Śīlādityanandi was the *dānapati*, and, consequently, the assumed *Vora* was the artisan<sup>9</sup>.

Finally, the small cross-like character above the second line between *°ta iti* is not a part of an akṣara. Although it looks very much like the usual mark called *kākapada*<sup>10</sup> indicating that something was omitted and supplemented later in inscriptions and manuscripts, not trace of an akṣara or a word can be discerned on the photos. Moreover, it is difficult to imagine any missing letter or word.

If these considerations are not too far off the mark the inscription can be translated tentatively as:

“#<sup>11</sup> In the year 7 [= AD 532] *ha(?)* 2<sup>nd</sup> month *āṣāḍha* 3<sup>rd</sup> [day]. This is the pious gift

<sup>5</sup> The only “name” very remotely comparable is *voraviṭajīvasoṭena*, Hodar 93:5 of uncertain interpretation in D. Bandini-König: *Die Felsbildstation Hodar*. Materialien zur Archäologie der Nordgebiete Pakistans 3, Mainz 1999, p. 348.

<sup>6</sup> *Palola Śāhis*, as note 1, p. 145.

<sup>7</sup> On artisans mentioned in inscriptions on art objects cf. Salomon: *Epigraphy*, as note 1, p. 246 foll. § 7.4.1.2, cf. note 9.

<sup>8</sup> For *-ri-*, cf. *Mittelindisch* § 126, for *-ra-*, cf. *AIGr I* § 28 (with “Nachträge”), for *-ari-*, cf. K. Hoffmann: *arikṣevā lokam*, *Indo-iranistik Band III*. Wiesbaden 1992, p. 801 foll., which is written for *ṛkṣā iva alomakā āsīt*, JB III 304,3; BHSD s.v. *Ariṣṭa* (2) and E. Waldschmidt: *Das Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* Band I. Berlin 1950, manuscript S 360, folio 167 recto 6 *jāgrte* for *jāgarite* (§ 10.12).

<sup>9</sup> For non-causative *kārita* meaning “made” cf. CPD s.v. *kārita* 2a. — Usually, there is a clear distinction between *kārita* and *kṛta*, that is between donor and artisan as, e.g., in the inscription on the pedestal of the Buddha Vipasyin from Kanaganahalli (no. 37:19/20): *bhagavā budho vivasi upāsakena vāgādhicāna(m) viśāghena kārapito saputakena seli(va)dhiki(sa) asādāvasa pana(u)kena sam(i)nāgasa natukena madhasa putena rāyāmacena bodhig(u)tena kato* “The (image of) Lord Buddha Vipasyin was commissioned (*kārapito*) by the layman from the Vāgādhica family, Viśākha, together with his son. (The image) was made (*kato*) by the sculptor of the royal household Bodhigupta, the son of of Maḍha, the grandson of Samināga, the great grand son of Asādāva.” The reading of this inscription given in *ARIRIAB* 10. 2007, p. 41 note 8 needs to be slightly corrected, cf. also *III* 51, 2008, p. 76.

<sup>10</sup> On this sign called *kākapada* cf. D. C. Sircar: *Indian Epigraphy*. Delhi 1965, p. 5, 91. A further example can be found in the inscription of the Saindhava King Ahivarma, *JOIB* 19. 1969/70, p. 284, cf. *III* 37. 2004, p. 316 note 25.

<sup>11</sup> The inscription begins with the so-called “om-sign,” cf. G. Roth: *Maṅgala-Symbols in Buddhist*

of Śrī Śīlādityanandin for the increase of auspicious merit. Vora made (incense burner and inscription).”

Alternatively, the formula “*deyadharmo yaṃ* name in the instrumental case *kṛtaṃ*” could be compared<sup>12</sup>. In this case *vora* / *dhora* / *bora* / *cora*<sup>13</sup> could not be considered as a name, but should be interpreted as an otherwise unknown word designating an incense burner:

“... This pious gift, an incense burner, was made by ...”

However, no example of this formula is attested so far, in which an object and the purpose of a donation is mentioned. Consequently, because two or even three difficult assumptions are necessary if this alley of interpretation is followed, the first suggestion is certainly to be preferred for the time being taking *vora* as a personal name.

The structure of this name of the donor, Śīlādityanandin, immediately recalls the names of the Palola Śāhis of the Bhagadatta family such as Vajrādityanandin or Vikramādityanandin. However, the early date of the incense burner (AD 532) is a certain warning to connect Śīlādityanandin immediately to that family. The oldest Palola Śāhis known at present *somana palola śāhi*, Khomar Das 8:1<sup>14</sup> seems to precede Vajrādityanandin, whose dates could be estimated roughly as AD 585-605<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, Śīlādityanandin, if connected at all to the Bhagadatta family, would be the earliest known member preceding the first ruler by about half a century. Therefore, the relation of Śīlādityanandin to the Bhagadatta family remains as uncertain as that of Sampūrnādityandin<sup>16</sup> or Maṅgalavikramādityanandin<sup>17</sup>: Neither name is characterized by a title or a family name.

This is the third incense burner known from the northwest of the Indian cultural area and the second portable one<sup>18</sup>. Only the other portable and much earlier incense burner is inscribed: “(Given) in the year 24 [of Kaniṣka = AD 151], in the Kṣāntika-śāntika-stūpa

Sanskrit Manuscripts and Inscriptions, in: *Deyadharmā. Studies in Memory of D. C. Sircar*. Delhi 1986, p. 239-249; L. Sander: Om or siddham — Remarks on Openings of Buddhist Manuscripts and Inscriptions from Gilgit and Central Asia, *ibidem*, p. 251-261.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Palola Śāhis*, as note 1, p. 181.

<sup>13</sup> It is purely accidental that *cora(ka)* means also “a certain perfume.” The reading *co* is the least likely.

<sup>14</sup> This station was originally named Thalpan III-Ziarat, cf. *Palola Śāhis*, as note 1, p. 47, no. 20 and p. 85. The structure of his name is quite different from those of the later rulers. The reason could be that Somana was not a member of the Bhagadatta family.

<sup>15</sup> On these fictive dates: *Palola Śāhis*, as note 1, p. 99.

<sup>16</sup> *Palola Śāhis*, as note 1, p. 48, no. 21 and p. 85 foll. The inscription is published now as Thalpan 227:19 in: D. Bandini-König: *Die Felsbildstation Thalpan III: Katalog Thalpan (Steine 196-450)*. Materialien zur Archäologie der Nordgebiete Pakistans 8, Mainz 2007, p. 46.

<sup>17</sup> *śrī maṅgalavikramādityanandi*, 524:5, *Thalpan IV*. The inscription will be published in Materialien zur Archäologie der Nordgebiete Pakistans 10. According to the structure of the name, Maṅgalavikramādityanandin could be the son of Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandin and his queen Maṅgalakesarī.

<sup>18</sup> The third incense burner, which is of different type, that is a heavy vessel that cannot easily be moved, was published and comprehensively discussed by E. Rosen-Stone: A Buddhist Incense Burner from Gandhāra. *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 39, 2004, p. 69-99. I am obliged to Professor R. Salomon for drawing my attention to this publication and for providing a copy of the article.

at Bahutapana(?), into the care of the teachers of the Dharmaguptakas" (H. Falk)<sup>19</sup>.

Interestingly, donors depicted on bronzes of the Palola Śāhis carry incense burners which are of exactly the same type<sup>20</sup> as the one donated by Śīlādityanandin such as the one seen in the right hand of Devaśrī or of Nandivikramādityanandin (figure 5)<sup>21</sup>. This, again, could indicate a connection of Śīlādityanandin to the Palola Śāhis.

The incense burner is part of a larger set of ritual implements comprising also four candlesticks most likely assembled for the purpose of venerating a Buddha image by using *dhūpa* and *dīpa*<sup>22</sup>. The shape of the candlesticks shows beyond doubt that they were really meant to support candles. Candles, however, are unknown to ancient Indian culture and no reference from literature or art has been found so far<sup>23</sup>.

On the other hand, illuminated rooms are depicted but rarely in images. However, fortunately two important events in the life of the Buddha occur at night: The dream of Māyā<sup>24</sup> and the departure of the Bodhisatva<sup>25</sup>. Both scenes are illuminated by oil lamps, which are visible in rather numerous images<sup>26</sup>. Candles, which were invented in Rome

<sup>19</sup> H. Falk: Three Inscribed Buddhist Monastic Utensils from Gandhāra. *ZDMG* 156, 2006, p. 392-412, esp. p. 404.

<sup>20</sup> There is a third type of incense burner remotely resembling a candle stick, which is carried in the right hand by Thocasimgha depicted on one of the book covers of the *Samghāṭasūtra*, cf. *Palola Śāhis*, as note 1, p. 151 with plate 160 in O. v. Hinüber: *Buddhistische Inschriften aus dem Tal des oberen Indus* in K. Jettmar (Ed.): *Rock Inscriptions in the Indus Valley*. Antiquities of Northern Pakistan. Reports and Studies 1. Mainz 1989, or by Dharmasimgha, ibidem, plate 137, cf. also *Palola Śāhis*, plate 3 with p. 28 no. 11, p. 154.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Palola Śāhis*, as note 1, Abb. 6 and 7 or, for the bronze donated by Nandivikramādityanandin ("Pritzker Buddha") also P. Pal: *Himālayas An Aesthetic Adventure*. Chicago 2003, no. 64, p. 109.

<sup>22</sup> This practice is mentioned almost everywhere in Buddhist texts and in inscriptions, cf., e.g., O. v. Hinüber: *Verwischte Spuren. Der Gebrauch buddhistischer Texte nach dem Zeugnis von Literatur, Inschriften und Dokumenten*, in: W. Reinhard (Ed.): *Sakrale Texte. Hermeneutik und Lebenspraxis in den Schriftkulturen*. München 2009, p. 153-173 (notes: p. 325-334), p. 167 with note 55.

<sup>23</sup> The daily illumination of a Buddhist monastery by oil lamps on the other hand is described at length, e.g., in the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* ed. by B. Jinananda. Patna 1969, p. 203-207, cf. also O. v. Hinüber: *Sprachentwicklung und Kulturgeschichte. Ein Beitrag zur materiellen Kultur des buddhistischen Klosterlebens*. Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz, Abhandlungen der geistes- und sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse Jg. 1992, Nr. 6, p. 68 fol.; note 135 (p. 70) should be corrected: The meaning "torch" for *daṇḍadīpaka* is corroborated by *daṇḍadīpikaveṭhananiyāmena sakalasarīram veṭhāpetvā ... suvaṇṇapātīm sugandhasapissa pūrāpetvā tattha saḥassavattiyo jāletvā*, Bv-a 144, 1-4 "wrapping round his whole body in the way torches are wrapped round, and filling with sweet-smelling clarified butter a golden vessel ..... he lit a thousand wicks in it" (after I. B. Horner: *The Clarifier of the Sweet Meaning*. London 1978, p. 206, where the text is partly misunderstood).

<sup>24</sup> The oldest image is found in Bhārhut: A. K. Coomaraswamy: *La sculpture de Bharhut*. Paris 1956, Planche XXIV, fig. 61, where a lamp is visible.

<sup>25</sup> When the Bodhisatva departs "lamps with scented oil were burning", as the *Nidānakathā* of the Jātaka states (*gandhatelapadīpā jhāyanti*, Ja I 61,21, cf. *kanakojjvaladīpadīpavṛkṣam ... garbham*, "the chamber illuminated by the golden splendor of a lamp-tree [see next note].", *Buddhacarita* V 44).

<sup>26</sup> The relevant material is collected in D. Schlingloff: *Ajanta. Handbuch der Malereien*. I. Erzählende Wandmalereien, Part II Supplement. Wiesbaden 2000, p. 149 "candle stick" No 64/XVI,191(24), p. 149 referring to: D. Schlingloff: *Ajanta. Handbuch der Malereien*. I. Erzählende Wandmalereien, Part I Interpretation, Wiesbaden 2000, on lamps p. 313 (Māyā's dream) and p. 365 (the Bodhisatva's departure), cf. Vol. I, 2 cf. p. 135 "sleeping" and p. 139 "dwelling house of the princess" showing the same picture under different aspects. The designation "candle stick" is a misnomer, because the lamp stand clearly does not hold a candle, but an oil lamp. The same is true for J. J. Jones: *The Mahāvastu. Translated from the Sanskrit*. Vol. II. London 1952, p. "lit by candlesticks" where the text has *dīpavṛkṣehi*, Mvu II 422,5: A "lamp-tree" is a stand with multiple branches for numerous oil lamps, cf. previous note. In modern translations and dictionaries the difference between lamp, torch, candlestick is often blurred, as it was already the case in classic texts in antiquity as R. J. Forbes: *Studies in Ancient Technology*. Vol. VI. Leiden

during Hellenistic times slowly spread eastward<sup>27</sup>. Consequently, this set of unknown origin might well be one of the easternmost traces of the use of candles by the middle of the first millennium AD.

Postscriptum:

The image of a ninth century *gandharva* from Kashmir (height 19.2 cm) carrying an incense burner on his head was published by U. von Schroeder: *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes*. Hong Kong, 1981, p. 121 fig. 17E.

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1966, p. 134 § 4 "The Candle" complains. — Different types of Indian lamps from modern times are depicted in G. Watt: *Indian Art at Delhi 1903 being the official catalogue of the Delhi Exhibition, 1902-1903*. Calcutta 1903 (repr. 1987), plate 12 with p. 55 or in R. F. Bussabarger and B. Dashew Robins: *The Everyday Art of India*. New York 1968, p. 25. In later times at the Mughal court candles were used, c.f., e. g., S. C. Welch: *Indische Buchmalerei unter den Großmoguln 16. - 19. Jahrhundert*, plate 31-32 painted 1656/7 and depicting the court of Shah Jahan.

<sup>27</sup> The history of the candle is traced by A. Neuburger: *Die Technik des Altertums*. Leipzig 1919, p. 239, 245 foll., cf. "Der Kleine Pauly" (1964) s.v. "Beleuchtung" and "Lexikon des Mittelalters" (1991) s.v. "Kerze;" "Der Neue Pauly" discusses candles neither under the headings "Beleuchtung" (1997) nor "Lampe" (1999).